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The type-localities of six of Sir Andrew Smith's Ploceidae specimens

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Sir Andrew Smith lived in South Africa from 1821 to 1837, mainly in Grahamstown and Algoa Bay (i.e. Port Elizabeth), Eastern Cape, and Cape Town, Western Cape (Kirby 1965). A British military doctor, he also collected a great many zoological specimens. Smith's descriptions of these appeared in the *Illustrations of the zoology of South Africa*, published in 1838–49 (Waterhouse 1880, reprinted in Smith 1977), and in earlier publications including the *South African Commercial Advertiser*, *South African Quarterly Journal* and an expedition report, many of which were collated by Salvin (1880). Several volumes of unpublished notes exist in the Transvaal Museum, South African Museum and Government Archives in Cape Town (Kirby 1965). Roberts (1936) published notes of the material in the Transvaal Museum.

Smith included 12 weavers in his *Illustrations* (Table 1), of which six are currently recognised type species (Clancey 1980; Table 2), though several type descriptions were published prior to the *Illustrations*. The ambit of the present paper is limited to investigating the type-localities of these six weavers.

TABLE 1
Synonyms for the weavers included by Smith. For those descriptions in Smith's *Illustrations*, the plate is listed.

Species	Smith's name	Reference	Part, Plate
Red-billed Buffalo-weaver <i>Bubalornis niger</i>	<i>Bubalornis niger</i>	Smith (1836)	
	<i>Textor erythrorhynchus</i>	Smith (1841a)	13: pl. 64
Scaly-feathered Finch <i>Sporopipes squamifrons</i>	<i>Estrela squamifrons</i>	Smith (1836)	
	<i>Amadina squamifrons</i>	Smith (1844)	20: pl. 95
White-browed Sparrow-weaver <i>Plocepasser mahali</i>	<i>Plocepasser Mahali</i>	Smith (1836)	
	<i>Plocepasser Mahali</i>	Smith (1841b)	13: pl. 65
Sociable Weaver <i>Philetairus socius</i>	<i>Philetairus lepidus</i>	Smith (1837)	
	<i>Philetairus lepidus</i>	Smith (1838b)	2: pl. 8
Spectacled Weaver <i>Ploceus ocularis</i>	<i>Ploceus ocularis</i>	Smith (1828)	
	<i>Ploceus ocularis</i>	Smith (1839)	7: pl. 30, fig. 2
Cape Weaver <i>Ploceus capensis</i>	<i>Ploceus capensis</i>	Smith (1841)	13: pl. 66, fig. 2
Yellow Weaver <i>Ploceus subaureus</i>	<i>Ploceus subaureus</i>	Smith (1839)	7: pl. 30, fig. 1
	<i>Ploceus aureoflavus</i>	Smith (1839)	
Southern Masked Weaver <i>Ploceus velatus</i>	<i>Ploceus personatus</i>	Smith (1828)	
	<i>Ploceus Tahatali</i>	Smith (1836)	
	<i>Ploceus mariquensis</i>	Smith (1845)	23: pl. 103
Village Weaver <i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	<i>Ploceus stictonotus</i>	Smith (1831)	
	<i>Ploceus spilonotus</i>	Smith (1841c)	13: pl. 66, fig. 1
Red-billed Quelea <i>Quelea quelea</i>	<i>Loxia Lathamii</i>	Smith (1836)	
Golden Bishop <i>Euplectes afer</i>	<i>Ploceus dubius</i>	Smith (1836)	
	<i>Euplectes taha</i>	Smith (1836)	
	<i>Euplectes taha</i>	Smith (1838a)	2: pl. 7
Fan-tailed Widow <i>Euplectes axillaris</i>	<i>Vidua</i> sp.	Smith (1831)	
	<i>Vidua axillaris</i>	Smith (1838c)	4: pl. 17
Thick-billed Weaver <i>Amblyospiza albifrons</i>	<i>Pyrenestes frontalis</i>	Smith (1840)	12: pl. 61–62

Smith's type-localities are often imprecise because he was more interested in describing ranges than providing formal type-localities. To identify and clarify type-localities, I searched the literature to determine the localities and dates of collection of weavers taken by Smith. The best-documented expedition is that to interior southern Africa, reaching the Tropic of Capricorn in Botswana (hereafter the North Expedition), during which he kept a diary (Kirby 1939, 1940) and a journal (Lye 1975), and subsequently wrote a report including descriptions of new mammals and birds (Smith 1836). His diary provides information on his progress, mapped by Kirby (1940) and Lye (1975), permitting the date and place of collection for *Bubalornis niger*, *Sporopipes squamifrons* and *Plocepasser mahali* to be determined. Three further weaver types are *Ploceus ocularis*, *P. subaureus* and *Euplectes axillaries*, which were collected in the Eastern Cape but accurate dates and localities were not provided by Smith. For these six, the type descriptions as given by Clancey (1980) are presented, with reference to where the types are housed, followed by a discussion of the dates and localities. Types are housed in the

TABLE 2

Localities of Smith's currently recognised weaver type-specimens, with approximate coordinates and dates of collection for each.

Species	Locality	Coordinates	Date
Red-billed Buffalo-weaver	Great Marico River	c.25°00'S, 26°23'E	1 Aug 1835
Scaly-feathered Finch	Moshawing River, Kuruman	c.26°47'S, 23°20'E	19 Mar 1835
White-browed Sparrow-weaver	Modder River	c.29°15'S, 26°43'E	6 Dec 1834
Spectacled Weaver	Grahamstown	c.33°19'S, 26°32'E	(1820–28)
Yellow Weaver	Algoa Bay	c.33°50'S, 25°50'E	(1820–32)
Fan-tailed Widowbird	Near the Kei River	32°30'S, 28°00'E?	(1820–31)

following museums: The Natural History Museum, Tring (BMNH), National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh (NMSZ), and National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside, Liverpool (MCML).

RED-BILLED BUFFALO-WEAVER *Bubalornis niger*

Bubalornis niger A. Smith, 1836, *Rep. Expd. Expl. Cent. Afr.*: 52: 'Country about Kurrichaine' =Zeerust, western Transvaal. Specimens: type NMSZ 1843.028.001 (Stenhouse 1930, Herman *et al.* 1990).

In Smith's *Illustrations* he expands on the locality given in the type description (Smith 1836): 'It was not till after we had passed to the northward of the 25th degree of south latitude that we discovered this bird' (Smith 1841a). Sclater (1930) restricted the type-locality to Kurrichaine, a peak 20 km north of Zeerust. Clancey (1964) restricted it to Zeerust, a town that did not exist in Smith's day. Skead (1973: 88, 254) listed both Kurrichaine or Kaditshwene (25°21'S, 26°11'E) and Zeerust (25°33'S, 26°05'E) as the localities for this, and many other, species.

In Smith's diary (Kirby 1940), his first and only reference to the species appears on 1 August 1835. Smith left Tolane (25°19'S, 26°32'E; Skead 1973) on 28 July and followed the Great Marico River to Eerstespoort (24°50'S, 26°27'E), which was reached on 8 August. Smith provides daily travel times, permitting an approximate locality to be calculated for 1 August as c.25°00'S, 26°23'E. This buffalo-weaver was not recorded at Zeerust during the atlas (Harrison *et al.* 1997), but was recorded rather frequently along the Marico River from 25°30'S north.

SCALY-FEATHERED FINCH *Sporopipes squamifrons*

Strelda Squamifrons A. Smith, 1836, *Rep. Expd. Expl. Cent. Afr.*: 49: South Africa, restricted to Kuruman, northern Cape, by Clancey, 1957, *Durban Mus. Novit.* 5: 50. Specimens: syntype BMNH 1872.10.4.92 (Warren & Harrison 1971); syntype ANSP 13911 (Stone 1899); syntypes MCML D1774 and D1774a (Wagstaffe 1978).

The type description records that the species 'Inhabits South Africa' (Smith 1836). In the *Illustrations* Smith lists two localities: 'This bird is frequently found to the northward of Latakoo (=Kuruman) but rarely to the southward; and the only

specimens seen from the latter were obtained towards the sources of the Great Fish River' (Smith 1844).

Vincent (1935) restricted the type-locality to Graaff-Reinet district, believing that Smith passed the source of the Great Fish River en route north. Macdonald (1957) suggested it be restricted to Kuruman, because Scaly-feathered Finch is commoner there. Clancey (1957, 1959) disagreed with Vincent because the bird did not occur in Graaff-Reinet. Vincent (1935), however, mentioned the Tandjiesberg (c.32°16'S, 25°06'E), the source of the Great Fish River, rather than Graaff-Reinet specifically. The species was not recorded in Graaff-Reinet or Tandjiesberg during the atlas (Harrison *et al.* 1997), but was found around Cradock and in the squares adjacent to the Tandjiesberg.

Smith's diary reveals that the North Expedition, starting from Graaff-Reinet, proceeded directly north to Compassberg, bypassing the Great Fish River (Kirby 1939). He recorded Scaly-feathered Finches twice on this expedition. Firstly, along the Moshawing River (26°47'S, 23°20'E), 80 km north of Kuruman (Kirby 1939), Northern Cape, on 19 March 1835, he found a nest with two chicks; there is no indication whether an adult was obtained. The second sighting was of birds feeding in the Cashan Valley (=west of Magaliesberg, 25°40'S, 27°05'E), North-west province, on 23 June 1835, with additional notes in the entry for 26 June (Kirby 1940). Smith's return journey to Graaff-Reinet was further west than the outbound and again bypassed the Great Fish River.

It seems that Smith did not collect the species near the Great Fish River on his North Expedition. Subsequently, he travelled directly from Graaff-Reinet to Algoa Bay and Cape Town (Kirby 1940, 1965), and did not return to the Eastern Cape again. Smith's specimen from the Eastern Cape must therefore have been collected prior to the North Expedition. Smith travelled widely and collected many specimens in the Eastern Cape in 1820–34 (Kirby 1965). Kirby (1965) does not mention any trips to Cradock or the source of the Great Fish River. Further study of Smith's unpublished notes may provide a precise date and locality for Smith's Eastern Cape Scaly-feathered Finch. His first published description, however, of the species was on the North Expedition and thus the type-locality does not require modification.

WHITE-BROWED SPARROW-WEAVER *Plocepasser mahali*

Plocepasser Mahali A. Smith, 1836, *Rep. Expd. Expl. Cent. Afr.*: 51: 'country between the Orange River and the Tropic', restricted to near the confluence of Modder and Riet rivers, western Orange Free State by Clancey, 1957, *Durban Mus. Novit.* 5: 48. Specimens: syntype BMNH 1845.7.6.132 (Warren & Harrison 1971); syntypes ANSP 14256–57 (Stone 1899).

Smith described *P. mahali* from between the Orange River and the Tropic (Smith 1836) and in the *Illustrations* described the locality as 'upon a tree on one of the tributary streams of the great northern branch of the Orange River' (Smith 1841b).

Smith crossed the Vaal, Modder, Black Modder (=Kaffer Spruit) and the Riet rivers (Smith 1836: 15) on his journey between Thaba Nchu and Philippolis on 4–17

December 1834. From his diary, it is clear that Smith moved east from Thaba Nchu until he reached the Modder River. He stayed here a few days collecting specimens, including the White-browed Sparrow-weaver, then moved south-east to Philippolis (Kirby 1939). Macdonald (1957) correctly restricted the type-locality to the Modder River near Bloemfontein. Clancey (1957, 1959) incorrectly changed this to the confluence of the Modder and Riet rivers (c.29°01'S, 24°40'E), because he thought that Smith did not cross the Modder River near Bloemfontein. Clancey quoted Macdonald & Hall (1957) where the correct type-locality was stated without explanation (this was published in Macdonald 1957). Clancey based his supposition on the map in Kirby (1940) where the upper reaches of the Modder River are not shown, but he failed to read the diary.

Smith also recorded this species along the Great Marico River (c.24°05'S, 26°55'E), on 10 September 1835 (Kirby 1940), but his first record was on the Modder River, near Thaba Nchu, on 6 December 1834. The correct type-locality is thus the Modder River (29°15'S, 26°43'E), near Thaba Nchu, Free State, South Africa.

SPECTACLED WEAVER *Ploceus ocularis*

Ploceus ocularis A. Smith, 1828, *S. Afr. Comm. Advert.* 3(144): 2: no locality, but = 'eastern districts of the Colony', i.e., eastern Cape. Grahamstown selected as a restricted type-locality by Clancey, 1966, *Durban Mus. Novit.* 7(13): 574. Specimens: syntype BMNH 1845.7.6.26 (Warren & Harrison 1971).

Smith's first weaver description was of Spectacled Weaver (Smith 1828, reprinted in Macdonald & Grant 1953). Smith did not provide a locality, but stated that it was 'Found in similar situations with the foregoing', wherein (*Ploceus personatus* = *P. velatus*) the locality was given as 'Found in the eastern districts of the Colony'. In Smith (1839) he described it as being 'sparingly distributed over South Africa: more especially in the vicinity of the south-east coast'. Clancey (1952) restricted the locality to Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, but Smith visited Durban for the first time only in 1832, four years later. Later, Clancey (1964) corrected this to the Eastern Cape and thereafter (1966) selected Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, as a type-locality because Smith was based there in his early years in South Africa. No adjustment to the type-locality is required.

YELLOW WEAVER *Ploceus subaureus*

Ploceus subaureus A. Smith, 1839, *Illustr. Zool. S. Africa*, Aves, pl. 30 (and text): Algoa Bay, eastern Cape. Specimens: syntype BMNH 1845.7.6.21 (Warren & Harrison 1971).

Smith possessed ten specimens, some he took himself 'all killed in the neighbourhood of Algoa Bay' (Smith 1839). In Smith (1839) he listed an earlier description by him, i.e. '*Ploceus subaureus* Smith. Proceedings of South African Institution, April, 1832'. The South African Institution (precursor to the Royal Society of South Africa) was inaugurated in Cape Town on 17 June 1829 and

published the *South African Quarterly Journal* from 1830 (Kirby 1965). The proceedings Smith mentioned are possibly printed versions of talks given at meetings of the institution. These proceedings have not been traced, so Smith (1839) remains the type description, but this reveals that the type was collected pre-1832. Shelley (1887) listed Smith (1832) as 'fide Smith (1839)', indicating that it did not exist even then.

Incidentally, a similar reference is made for Spectacled Weaver, i.e. '*Ploceus ocularis* Smith. Proceedings of South African Institution, Nov. 1828'. The year must be an error for 1829 because the institution was not yet in existence—Smith occasionally recorded incorrect years (Kirby 1965). The type-locality for Yellow Weaver remains 'neighbourhood of Algoa Bay' = Algoa Bay (c.33°50'S, 25°50'E), Eastern Cape, South Africa.

FAN-TAILED WIDOWBIRD *Euplectes axillaris*

Vidua axillaris A. Smith, 1838, *Illustr. Zool. S. Africa*, Aves, pl. 17 (and text): 'between seven and eight hundred miles... eastward of Cape Town... in Caffreland' = eastern Cape. Specimens: untraced.

Smith described this species from a specimen 'obtained upon the south-east coast, between seven and eight hundred miles . . . eastward of Cape Town, . . . in Caffreland' (Smith 1838c). Smith actually described it earlier, but did not provide a specific name (*Vidua* sp., Smith 1831: 12), though he did give the locality as near the Kei River (Smith 1831), Eastern Cape, South Africa, and the collection date would have been in 1820–31. Smith crossed the Great Kei River on 18 January on his trip to KwaZulu-Natal in 1832, but clearly he must have collected Fan-tailed Widowbird on an earlier excursion to the Kei. The type-locality can be restricted to Great Kei River, Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Conclusion

Andrew Smith's published, annotated diaries of his North Expedition (Kirby 1939, 1940) provide an excellent resource for type-localities of specimens collected during this trip, as well as dates of collection. Of six weaver type-localities, that of the White-browed Sparrow-weaver must be revised per Vincent's restriction. I provide more detailed localities for Red-billed Buffalo-weaver, Scaly-feathered Finch and Fan-tailed Widowbird. The type localities of Spectacled and Yellow Weavers do not require modification. It is suggested that all of Smith's type-localities be checked.

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New and noteworthy records of birds from south-eastern Nicaragua

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The south-eastern Nicaraguan lowlands, bordering Costa Rica along the río San Juan, constitute one of the more extensive forested areas in Central America and sustain a rich avifauna (Howell 1969). However, for historical and political reasons, Nicaragua's flora and fauna remain poorly studied (Gillespie 2001). Recently, interest in ornithology has slowly increased, but neighbouring Costa Rica is still pre-eminent in terms of research and conservation, and a far more popular tourist destination due to its comparatively well-known avifauna and comprehensive field guide (Stiles & Skutch 1989). In contrast, there are few publications on Nicaraguan ornithological research (Martínez-Sánchez 1990), though the last dozen or so years have seen renewed efforts, including specific studies on Nicaraguan birds conducted by both nationals and foreigners (Cody 2000a,b, Arguedas-Negrini 2001, Wiedenfeld *et al.* 2001, Gillespie 2001, 2002, Woltmann 2004, Kjeldsen 2005; <http://www.bio-nica.org/biblioteca/BibliAves.htm>). Whilst these have considerably increased our knowledge, there is still a large information gap regarding distributions of Nicaraguan birds (Gillespie 2001) and additional data are needed so that conservation efforts can be directed appropriately. Here we present noteworthy